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Legal Agreement pertaining to the Oral History Interviews of George Ball

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, George Ball of New York, New York do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recordings and transcripts of the personal interviews conducted on July 8 and July 9, 1971 at New York, New York and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

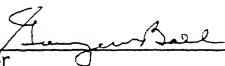
(1) The transcripts shall be available for use by researchers as soon as they have been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

(2) The tape recordings shall be available to those researchers who have access to the ~~tape~~. ^{transcript}

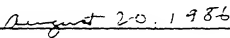
(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcripts and tapes.

(4) Copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.

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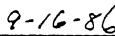
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Date



Archivist of the United States



Date

INTERVIEW I

DATE: July 8, 1971
INTERVIEWEE: GEORGE BALL
INTERVIEWER: PAIGE E. MULHOLLAN
PLACE: Mr. Ball's office in New York City

Tape 1 of 1

- M: Let's begin by identifying you, sir. You're George Ball, and during the Johnson Administration you served as under secretary [of state] from the time Mr. Johnson took office until the summer of 1966.
- B: Until the end of September of 1966.
- M: Then you came back as ambassador to the United Nations for a very short period.
- B: A period of four months beginning--I thought it was the beginning of June of 1968, but that wouldn't make it four months, would it? No, it wasn't four months.
- M: It was April, May, and June, wasn't it?
- B: Actually I was appointed in April, but because of the fact that Arthur Goldberg, who was my predecessor, wanted to see something through--I've forgotten what it was--I didn't actually take office, as I recall, till June.
- M: How well did you know Mr. Johnson back in the days prior to his vice presidency, when you were working for Governor Stevenson in his campaigns of the fifties? Did you have any personal contact with Lyndon Johnson then at all?
- B: Very little. I knew him casually, not only because of my relationship

with Stevenson, but because as a lawyer in Washington I had had some very casual relations with him. But I didn't know him well, no.

M: Did that include the 1960 convention when Mr. Johnson was an outspoken candidate on his own, as well as Mr. Stevenson?

B: Actually in 1960 I was at the convention. I didn't take any part in it. I was simply there on the sidelines, holding Adlai's hand. It wasn't a very happy affair, because none of us expected him to be nominated, but one had to see it through.

M: What about Mr. Johnson as vice president? You were in the State Department throughout that period, first as under secretary for economic affairs and later as under secretary.

B: I had a certain amount of dealings with him, and they were all very satisfactory, very pleasant. One got the very clear impression of a man who was quite unhappy with his lot. Here was a man who was an activist, who was used to being at the center of power in the Senate, who suddenly found himself with substantially no power whatsoever, working with a president who, for reasons I've never been able to understand, treated him as apparently every president treats his vice president: fails to include him in serious councils, rather ignores his advice, and gives him the most menial tasks.

M: Does that mean that Mr. Johnson wasn't really very close to any of the foreign policy decisions that you worked with while you were working for Mr. Kennedy?

B: He was not at all close to them. He was actually involved in very few of the decisions that were taken during that period, or in very

little of the discussion. Now, an exception to that was in October of 1962 when he came into the meetings of the so-called Ex-Com during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Those meetings were held in my conference room at the State Department. We had a kind of continuous session that went on for that week while we were trying to decide what action to take.

He came into the meetings. He said relatively little. He didn't take a dominant part at all in the discussions. The rest of us did to a much greater extent. He was inclined to take quite a hard line, as I recall, but displaying at the same time a kind of deference to the rest of the group, almost making it clear that he recognized that he didn't have the background and experience, that he had not been through this problem in as intimate a sense as most of the rest of us had been.

M: The stereotype of the man always concerned with domestic things and not very knowledgeable about foreign affairs is fairly true then, ~ - officially.

B: That's fairly true. Then, of course, he went on certain missions. He went on the mission to Berlin at the time of the Wall. But it was again in a kind of public relations role rather than a substantive role.

M: From the department's point of view, how did he perform as a public relations ambassador, either in the Berlin case or in his Vietnam trip? Acceptably or unknowledgeably?